

REMARKS

Summary of the Current Standing of the Claims

Claims 23-28 and 31-33 stand objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but have been otherwise indicated as containing allowable subject matter.

Claims 1-22, 29, 30, 34 and 35 stand rejected in light of one or more cited references.

Summary of the Claim Amendments

Claims 23, 25, 26, 31 and 32 have been placed in independent format. New claims 36-40 have been added depending from claims 23, 25, 26, 31 and 32, respectively. Claim 29 has been amended to depend from claim 26, and claims 34 and 35 have been amended to depend from claim 32. Some additional amendments have also been made to certain claims to address minor informalities therein and/or to have them better reflect the subject matter to which Applicant is entitled.

Claims 1-22 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein.

Drawings

With regard to the drawings, Applicant submits that the replacement drawings accompanying the present paper address any objectionable informalities. An early indication of their acceptability is requested.

Present Claims Distinguish Patentably over the Prior Art

The Examiner has already conceded that claims 23, 25, 26, 31 and 32 incorporate allowable subject matter. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that currently amended claims 23, 25, 26, 31 and 32, now in independent format, distinguish patentably over the prior art and are in condition for allowance along with claims 24, 27-30 and 33-40 that depend therefrom.

As claim 1-22 are no longer pending, any rejections or objections thereto are now moot. Accordingly, no further comment thereon is deemed necessary.

CONCLUSION

All outstanding objections and/or rejections having been addressed, the application presently stands in condition for allowance. Accordingly, an early indication of the same is earnestly solicited. Alternatively, in the interests of advancing this application to issue and compact prosecution, the Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner telephone the undersigned if the Examiner feels personal contact would be advantageous to the disposition of this case.

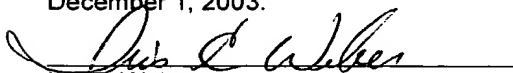
Respectfully submitted,

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Certificate of Mailing Under 37 CFR 1.8

I hereby certify that this **Amendment A** in connection with **Application Serial No. 09/488,297** is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P. O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on December 1, 2003.


Iris E. Weber